

## **SEP 2025 – A PARTNERSHIP APPROACH TO WASTE PREVENTION AND RECYCLING**

### **Executive Summary**

The purpose of this report is to seek approval on the partnership approach to waste prevention and recycling in Surrey for the next three years (SEP 2025, attached at Appendix 1 to the report).

SEP (Surrey Environment Partnership) continuously strives to improve collection and disposal services in Surrey and aspires to be among the best nationally on all key performance indicators.

Since the Resources and Waste Strategy (RaWS) for England was published in December 2018, the Government has consulted on a number of the strategy's ambitions across a range of subjects, the results of which will provide policy direction, which we eagerly await. The policy situation combined with Surrey's growing population, increasing numbers of households, and changes in the types of waste produced by our residents means change is a certainty. However, the exact direction of the change and the impact it will have on our collection and disposal services remains unclear.

Whilst things are so uncertain, now is not the right time to update the Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy (JMWMS) and consult with residents, so we need a short-term approach to help manage Surrey's recycling and waste in the most efficient, effective, economical and sustainable way.

SEP 2025 has been developed to bridge the gap between our existing JMWMS and further clarity from central government. It will reflect the vision of SEP and provide clear strategic direction for the partnership for the next three years to 2025 and a longer-term vision that will allow SEP to continue to follow the waste hierarchy and work towards zero waste.

SEP 2025 is therefore a partnership approach to waste prevention and recycling, and has been developed on behalf of all Surrey local authorities through the SEP.

### **Recommendations**

The Executive is requested to:

#### **RESOLVE That**

- (i) the SEP 2025, attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be endorsed and adopted as set out in the approach document in Annex 1 to the report; and
- (ii) the Strategic Director – Place be delegated to approve the local delivery plan for Woking, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder and in partnership with Joint Waste Solutions.

### **Reasons for Decision**

Reason: In Surrey about £105 million is spent each year collecting, managing and processing recycling and waste. By increasing the amount of waste prevented and the proportion recycled in the county it enables the cost of this service to reduce. It also benefits the environment; less raw materials are required, saving energy, emissions and protecting natural resources.

## SEP 2025 – A Partnership Approach to Waste Prevention and Recycling

Adopting SEP 2025 will enable Woking Borough Council to work in partnership with Surrey's authorities in the face of a number of challenges at a new level of focus to reduce costs where possible whilst increasing performance and still providing a high-quality service to Surrey residents. It will also ensure as a partnership, that Surrey's authorities are well prepared to manage the changes that will need to be introduced as a result of RaWS in the most efficient and effective way.

The Executive has the authority to determine the recommendation(s) set out above.

**Background Papers:** [SEP 2025](#)

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## SEP 2025 – A Partnership Approach to Waste Prevention and Recycling

### 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Surrey Environmental Partnership (SEP) is made up of Surrey County Council (SCC) and the 11 district and borough councils (D&Bs) in the county. It was formed originally in 2009 to overcome the challenges of two-tier service delivery and aims to manage Surrey's recycling and waste in the most efficient, effective, economical, and sustainable way possible.
- 1.2 All two-tiered authorities are required to have a Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy (JMWMS). SEP's current JMWMS runs until 2024-25. However, it was last updated in 2015 and is therefore considered to be 'out of date'. A key policy is to support the RaWS, RaWS is still emerging and therefore, the review has been postponed until the national policy direction is clearer.

#### Emerging policy

- 1.3 RaWS will fundamentally change how recycling and waste services will be funded and delivered in the future, and to that end has set out several proposed policy reforms including the following key measures:
  - Invoke the 'polluter pays' principle through **extended producer responsibility (EPR)** for packaging to ensure producers of products bear financial responsibility for the management of the waste stage of a product's life cycle (except ground litter). The Government has committed to introducing this from April 2024.
  - Introduce a **deposit return scheme (DRS)** for drinks containers to reward residents for bringing back bottles and encourage them not to litter; thereby increasing the quality and quantity of recycling. The scheme is to include cans and plastic bottles (not glass) and is still under consideration for implementation from late 2024.
  - Improve recycling rates by ensuring **consistency in household and business recycling** collections. Key proposals include the collection of the same dry recyclable materials (glass, metal, plastic and paper and card) as separately as possible, collection of additional dry recycling such as cartons and plastic films and flexibles, collection of food waste separately at least once a week, and collection of garden waste for free or for a maximum cost. These measures are still under consideration for implementation from 2023-24, but likely to be delayed to coincide with EPR.
- 1.4 The measures in RaWS alongside other plans have set out the following key strategic ambitions to be achieved nationally over the next 30 years:
  - Increase the municipal recycling rate to 55% by 2025 and 65% by 2035.
  - Business fleet owners and operators work towards 100% of vehicle fleets being zero emission by 2030, or earlier where markets allow (COP26 ambition).
  - 50% reduction in per capita residual waste (excluding major mineral wastes) by 2042 from 2019 levels (proposed).

#### Current performance

- 1.5 Significant achievements have been made possible by working together as a partnership; the most notable being Surrey's improved recycling rate, which in 2010-11 was 46.4% (13<sup>th</sup> highest nationally) and by 2020-21 was 55.1% (3<sup>rd</sup> highest nationally).

## SEP 2025 – A Partnership Approach to Waste Prevention and Recycling

### 2.0 Proposal

#### Key priorities

2.1 The response to this situation is to develop a partnership approach to waste prevention and recycling in Surrey for the next three years. The approach will:

- Bridge the gap ahead of further clarity from central Government.
- Consider the anticipated changes that may result from the key emerging national policy to support RaWS.
- Provide clear strategic direction for the next three years and a longer-term vision for the partnership that will continue to follow the waste hierarchy, align with the Government's ambitions such as a 55% recycling rate by 2025 and 65% by 2035 and work towards zero waste reducing emissions in the process. This will aid the future development of a new JMWMS for Surrey post-2025.
- Enable us to drive down waste (particularly food and single-use plastic (SUP) waste) and increase the quality and quantity of our recycling (including participation in food waste recycling).
- Address other key priorities to promote and maximise reuse, decarbonise our waste collection and street cleansing vehicle fleet, support the development of infrastructure and optimised collections, and reduce fly-tipping and littering.

#### Other options considered

2.2 The other options below have been considered and been discounted for the following reasons:

2.3 **Do nothing** - To maintain the status quo is unlikely to give us the level of performance uplift we seek to keep on course with long term national targets.

2.4 **Update the existing JMWMS** - While the current situation with emerging national policy is still unclear and so uncertain, the partnership feel it is not the right time to go through a lengthy and costly exercise to update the existing JMWMS, which would include a public consultation.

### 3.0 Engagement and consultation

3.1 A dedicated Steering Group was established to provide strategic direction, oversight and accountability for the development of SEP 2025. This group contained a mixture of waste officers and Elected Members (responsible for waste). It met six times between February and October 2022.

3.2 Alongside this, updates were given at the quarterly SEP Officer Group meetings in February, May and September. SEP officers were also given the opportunity to review and provide input on the draft approach document and appendices throughout October and at their quarterly meeting in November.

3.3 Portfolio holders (or equivalent) for environment including waste at Surrey's authorities have been kept informed through their quarterly SEP Member Group meetings in February, June and September, and via their lead SEP officer. On 23 November 2022, these portfolio holders and lead officers came together at the SEP Members Group to give partnership approval to the SEP 2025 approach document.

## SEP 2025 – A Partnership Approach to Waste Prevention and Recycling

### 4.0 Key implications

#### Risk management

- 4.1 If not all partners adopt SEP 2025 it would impact on the ability of the partnership to work closely to improve performance and manage recycling and waste in a way that offers best value to the Surrey taxpayer. However, this risk has been mitigated by the engagement carried out, which has involved all lead officers of SEP including relevant portfolio holders as well as the dedicated Steering Group setup for SEP 2025.

#### Financial and Value for Money

- 4.2 Adopting SEP 2025 will enable Surrey's councils to work more closely to improve performance and manage recycling and waste in a way that offers best value to the Surrey taxpayer.
- 4.3 The delivery of SEP 2025 will be supported by the partnership budget, which is set and agreed annually by lead officers and relevant portfolio holders for recycling and waste at Surrey's authorities.

#### Legal

- 4.4 The Waste and Emissions Trading Act 2003 requires all local authorities in a two tier system to have in place a joint strategy for the management of waste from households, to review it and keep the strategy up to date.
- 4.5 As explained above, there is a Surrey JMWMS, but SEP 2025 is an extension to this for the next 3 years until the national direction on emerging policy via RaWS is clear. At the start of 2025 (the final year for SEP 2025) the partnership will begin work on developing a new Surrey JMWMS. At this point we should have further clarity from the Government on the way forward following the implementation of the RaWS measures which are set to start from 2024-25. Once the Surrey JMWMS is drafted, consulted on, approved and adopted, this will be the new plan for partnership working from 2026.
- 4.6 This is not a direct relation to SEP 2025, but the Government introduced the Environment Act 2021 in November 2021 that makes provision for most of the described targets and gives them the legislative power to introduce the measures from RaWS above. The Act will also make some changes to existing legislations to enable consistency in collections.

#### Sustainability and climate change

- 4.7 SEP 2025 is likely to have beneficial climate change and carbon emissions implications, for example; reducing waste arisings and recycling material rather than disposing of it reduces the carbon impact of producing materials and associated emissions from transportation and disposal.
- 4.8 One of the key projects within SEP 2025 will be to develop an infrastructure and transport plan that enables us to comply with the RaWS and key emerging policy; and decarbonise waste collection and street cleansing vehicle fleets ideally by 2030 but in line with existing local authority policies.

#### Equalities & Human Resources

- 4.9 There are no direct equalities implications resulting from the high level content of this report and the SEP 2025 approach document. However, individual equality impact assessments will be carried out on projects that form part of SEP 2025 where applicable.

## **SEP 2025 – A Partnership Approach to Waste Prevention and Recycling**

- 4.10 The partnership work programmes are delivered by a single officer team known as JWS in collaboration with Surrey's councils. As part of this Surrey's councils have some responsibility to help support the delivery of the work programme.

### Communications

- 4.11 Partnership communications are managed by SEP and delivered by JWS. It is likely that national communications campaigns will be developed for the changes resulting from RaWS via the charity known as the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP). However, local campaigns will need to be delivered to communicate these changes especially given that it's very unlikely that there will be complete consistency in collection amongst local authorities. In the first instance it is recommended that these discussions start off within SEP to see if and where this could be joined up and coordinated.

### Community safety

- 4.12 There are no direct community safety implications resulting from the content of this report. However, one of the actions within SEP 2025 seeks to work with the fly-tipping enforcement teams to continue to share and develop intelligence, knowledge and best practice.

## **5.0 Timetable for implementation/what's next**

- 5.1 SEP 2025 is being taken through individual councils' democratic processes from December 2022 to March 2023, which will hopefully result in formal adoption across SEP by April 2023.
- 5.2 At the same time, JWS are leading the process to design and develop individualised delivery plans with Surrey's authorities that support the delivery of SEP 2025. It's expected that these plans will be signed off and ready to deliver against from April 2023.
- 5.3 Progress against the targets, and key actions including the annual SEP work programme and local delivery plans will be monitored quarterly and discussed at the SEP Officer and Member Group meetings.
- 5.4 Targets and the work programme/individual delivery plans will be reviewed annually with adjustments to targets made where necessary including adding new projects to the usual SEP work programme and individual delivery plans, where required to support target achievement. This will be developed and agreed with SEP Officers and Members Groups.

REPORT ENDS